

ACTNOW! NEWSLETTER



January

- 1/11** Suburbs Community Schools Training (Rescheduled December Training)
- 1/13** Chicago Community Schools Training (Rescheduled December Trainings)
- 1/13** Illinois Quality Program Self-Assessment Tool (IL-QPSA) Webinar for New Users #2
- 1/14** Illinois Quality Program Self-Assessment Tool (IL-QPSA) Webinar for Returning Users #1
- 1/21** ACT Now STEM Webinar #3: Fitting STEM Curricula into OST Programming

Policy Updates

State Policy

Chalkbeat Article: Chicago Public Schools Reopens Schools Across the City of Chicago In Preparation of Returning Pre-K and Special Education Students

On **October 16, 2020**, Chicago Public Schools (CPS) announced that all students in the district would begin the second quarter learning at home. However, CPS maintained that the school district would reopen in phases, prioritizing Pre-K students and special education youth enrolled in moderate and intensive cluster programs later on in the second quarter. This plan entailed five days a week of in-person learning for Pre-K and special education students. CPS noted that specific specialty schools may utilize a hybrid model in order to allow for social distancing and has limited class size to 15 students. There also continues to be a remote learning option for families that will not send their students back to school premises. To read the reopening plan and letter to CPS' families, click [here](#).

Throughout the holidays and into the New Year, CPS educators, support staff, families, and the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) have protested the reopening plan citing the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and corresponding safety concerns of vulnerable student populations, their families, and school personnel. On **January 3, 2021**, more than 30 Chicago aldermen signed a letter to Mayor Lori Lightfoot and CPS CEO Janice Jackson, highlighting nine steps they want the district to take before students return to class. Steps include establishing a more robust and clear health criteria for reopening and improving technology for those who continue with remote learning. To read this letter, click [here](#).

Yesterday, CPS reopened its school buildings across the City of Chicago in preparation of these returning student populations. CTU, which continues to oppose the district's reopening plan, encouraged teachers who felt unsafe not to return to buildings. CTU provided teachers with a document stating their contractual right to a safe working environment to give to principals. Unfortunately, for teachers who were called back but choose not to return, the consequences could include disciplinary action or firing. To read more about the situation, click [here](#).

Governor's Office: Cannabis Arrest Records to be Expunged and Information on the Restore, Reinvest, and Renew (R3) Program

On **December 31, 2020**, Governor Pritzker shared that 492,129 non-felony cannabis related arrest records have been expunged at the state level by the Illinois State Police (ISP). This announcement comes four years ahead of the deadline set in the Cannabis Regulation and Tax Act (CRTA), the equity-centric cannabis legislation signed into [law](#) by Governor Pritzker in 2019. Additionally, the Governor issued pardons for 9,219 low-level cannabis conviction records. Governor Pritzker announced that his

administration remains committed to ensuring the cannabis industry is equitable for all Illinois residents, regardless of background. Under the law, 25% of revenues collected from recreational cannabis sales will be directed to communities that have been disproportionately impacted by the justice system through the [Restore, Reinvest and Renew \(R3\) Program](#). In the coming weeks, the R3 program will grant over \$25 million in funding to community-based organizations working in historically underserved communities across Illinois. To read more about this initiative, click [here](#). To access the R3 Board website, click [here](#).

Governor's Office: Reduced Co-Pays for Families in Illinois' Child Care Assistance Program Announced

On **December 30, 2020**, Governor Pritzker announced that families in the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), will pay a maximum of \$1.25 in monthly co-pays. This action relates to the Governor's new initiative to allocate additional funds to support child care providers across the state and in order to support low-income families and working parents with child care services. These lower CCAP rates are applicable in January and February 2021. To read the full press release, click [here](#). For updates regarding CCAP, click [here](#). To access the Illinois Department of Human Services' (IDHS) website, which administers CCAP, click [here](#).

Illinois Department of Labor: Minimum Wage Increased to \$11 an Hour

On **December 29, 2020**, the Illinois Department of Labor announced that Illinois' minimum wage would increase to \$11 an hour on January 1, 2021. As such, the agency is encouraging employees to monitor their paychecks to ensure that time worked in 2021 is paid at this new rate. Workers who are under 18 years old and work fewer than 650 hours in a year will earn a minimum wage of \$8.50 per hour beginning January 1, 2021. For more information regarding this minimum wage increase, click [here](#).

For a list of previously listed policy updates, click [here](#).

Trainings, Events and Webinars

Administration

ACT Now: Community Schools Convenings Rescheduled for January

ACT Now will continue to host training events for Community Schools (CS) providers throughout the state during FY21. Due to unforeseen scheduling issues during the month of December, two trainings have been pushed to early-January:

- The training for **Suburban providers** originally scheduled for December 17, 2020, will be hosted on **January 11, 2021, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.** The session is titled Ending the Silence for Staff: Recognizing and Addressing Mental

Health Symptoms in Young People. It will help providers recognize the signs and symptoms of mental illness in young people. To register for this event, click [here](#).

- The trainings originally scheduled for mid-December, and developed for **Chicago providers**, are rescheduled for **January 13, 2021, from 9:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.** This training is focused on the topic of Trauma and Culture. To register for the event, click [here](#).

More information regarding the regional events is located on our Community Schools Corner page. To access it, click [here](#).

ACT Now: Illinois Quality Program Self Assessment Webinars

ACT Now is excited to hear from you, whether you are a new or a returning IL-QPSA user! The IL-QPSA affords providers the opportunity to assess their performance based on the Illinois Statewide Afterschool Quality Standards. Joining a cohort, depending on your prior QPSA usage, provides you with free one-on-one technical assistance along with free tools such as a data dashboard, automated surveys, and both site and agency-wide reports.

- On **January 13, 2021, from 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.**, ACT Now is hosting a webinar for ***New Users***
- On **January 14, 2021, from 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.**, ACT Now is facilitating a webinar for ***Returning Users***

To register for either webinar click [here](#). *Please Note: Once you have registered for the IL-QPSA, you will be placed in either the New Users group or the Returning Users dependent upon your selection. Webinar links and supplemental information will be sent to you via calendar invitation.*

ACT Now: Statewide Quality Standards Trainings (QST) Update

Due to the continuing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, **ACT Now** has decided to cancel all in-person Quality Standards Trainings (QST) at the 101 and 102 levels. As a result, additional opportunities have been added for afterschool providers interested in participating in virtual webinars. To register for QST 101 events, click [here](#). Please check our QST page for more information and in order to register for the upcoming QST 102 training by clicking [here](#). If you have any questions and or concerns regarding these trainings, please contact Emma Vibber at VibberE@actnowillinois.org.

Youth Development

ACT Now: FY21 STEM Webinar Series

On **January 21, 2021, from 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.**, **ACT Now** will help afterschool providers understand the ease in which STEM curricula can be combined with “traditional enrichment” OST programming and will offer best practices for integrating STEM lessons and learning outcomes into your program. Hear from STEM professionals and colleagues already facilitating STEM curricula about their experiences incorporating STEM as a continuous theme into programming and how they are engaging youth in STEM. To register, click [here](#).

For an archive of our previously listed Trainings, Events and Webinars, click [here](#).

Resources for Providers

Youth Development

ACT Now: The Learning About COVID-19 Activity Guide Spanish Edition

The Learning About COVID-19 Activity Guide has been developed for the [50 State Afterschool Network](#), with leadership from the [Alaska Afterschool Network](#), to engage and support children and youth nationwide. In particular, this guide will help to educate youth on the science behind COVID-19 and to help foster greater social awareness and empathy in communities. The guides are now translated into Spanish to ensure greater access to high-quality activities and challenges. To review these guides, click [here](#).

eSchool News Articles: Multimedia Learning Tools for the Classroom, Team-Building Activities for Virtual Learning, and How to Teach Robotics and Coding from Home

[eSchool News](#) has published a series of articles regarding tools, activities, and strategies for engaging virtual instruction.

- The first article highlights twelve multimedia learning tools and resources that afterschool providers can utilize in their virtual programming. The article highlights platforms that allow students and youth to create their own short video stories, books, and develop projects using slide decks, templates, and images. These initiatives can be facilitated in a group-based and virtual or hybrid setting. Finally, the resources will help to elevate student engagement and support providers looking to share information in new and innovative ways. To read the full article, click [here](#).
- The second article showcases ten team-building activities that can be facilitated in an online or hybrid environment. These activities are great for introductions,

quick breaks between virtual sessions, and for fostering deeper collaboration and understanding between youth participants. The games can also be modified for different age groups. To access the article, click [here](#).

- The final article elevates the experience of an educator as he continues to teach students about robotics and coding while they are in virtual instruction. The article shares tips and best practices and highlights specific and high-quality coding programs for afterschool providers. To read the article, click [here](#).

For an archive of our previously listed Trainings, Events and Webinars, click [here](#).

Opportunities for Providers

Administration

Enlace Chicago: Employment Opportunity

[Enlace Chicago](#) is soliciting applications for its Evaluation and Data Specialist, who will work with Community Schools and become a part of the Education Team. Candidates must have experience in the youth development sector, be familiar with the 21st Century and Community Schools models, and have knowledge of developing ongoing program evaluations. Applicants must also have a minimum of a bachelor's degree and three years' experience in coordinating education programs and grant writing. **Applications are due today**. Please send a cover letter and resume to jobs@enlacechicago.org using the title "Education Evaluation and Data Specialist." To learn more about this opportunity, click [here](#).

For an archive of our previously listed Opportunities for Providers, click [here](#).

Youth Opportunities

Administration

Illinois Student Assistance Commission: Free Assistance for Students Applying for Financial Aid

Yesterday, the [Illinois Student Assistance Commission \(ISAC\)](#) announced that the organization is working to address some of the pandemic-related challenges that high school and graduating seniors may face while completing financial aid applications for next fall. ISAC will be adding new initiatives to its college outreach programs that include: targeted outreach and one-on-one assistance to students and families, online financial aid modules that teachers can use with their students, and more. To access more information on these new support services for students, click [here](#).

Youth Development

Project Exploration: Winter Computer Science Camp Registration

[Project Exploration](#) is hosting its Winter Computer Science Camp for students in grades 3 through 8. The virtual Camps, focus on four themes and run from **December 28, 2020, to January 29, 2021**. Youth will have the opportunity to learn about and try their hand in Scratch, Python, Jupyter, and Apple. Participants will also meet computer scientists! No prior STEM knowledge or experience is required to participate. To register for this opportunity, click [here](#).

National Girls Collaborative Project and EngineerGirl Ambassador Webinar: Empowering High-Schoolers and Inspiring Young Girls

[The National Girls Collaborative Project](#) and [EngineerGirl Ambassador](#) are hosting a webinar on **January 12, 2021, at 5:00 p.m.**, to highlight the opportunity to become an EngineerGirl Ambassador. Participants will learn about the program and how an ambassador may design, develop, and implement a project in her local community that will encourage younger girls - particularly those with less access to engineering role models - to think about engineering, STEM careers, and more. To learn more about the webinar, click [here](#).

National Girls Collaborative Project, Smithsonian Museum's Because of Her Initiative, and NASA Event: Reach Across the Stars

[The National Girls Collaborative Project](#), [Smithsonian Museum's Because of Her Story Initiative](#), and [NASA](#) are hosting a virtual event on **January 27, 2021, at 1:00 p.m.**, for students interested in meeting women who have navigated barriers and achieved recognition in space and related science fields. This event is also in celebration of National Mentoring Month and will allow participants to learn more about diverse women in STEM. This webinar will consist of a panel with STEM professionals and scientists who are featured in a free augmented reality (AR) app designed to allow users to explore the universe and unlock the often-overlooked stories of women and their contributions to space exploration and science. To register for the event, click [here](#).

For an archive of our previously listed Youth Opportunities, click [here](#).

Funding Opportunities

Youth Development

Sodexo Stop Hunger Foundation: Youth Grants

[Sodexo](#) is soliciting applications from youth-led community service groups, afterschool programs, community-based organizations, schools, and young people themselves for

its Stop Hunger Foundation Youth Grants. The company is offering grants of up to \$500 to support youth leaders ages 5-25 across the U.S. to turn their ideas into action and make an impact on the issue of childhood hunger. There is also a fundraising match grant opportunity. Projects must engage at least 25 young people ages 5-25 as volunteers between March 1, 2021, and May 31, 2021, with some activity on Global Youth Service Day. **Applications are due January 22, 2021, at 11:59 p.m.** To apply, click [here](#).

American Honda Foundation: STEM Grant Opportunity

[The American Honda Foundation](#) is looking for applicants for its grant opportunity that focuses on fostering youth education and STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) competencies. Applicants may also choose to use the funding for job literacy programming. The grant range is from \$20,000 to \$75,000 over a one-year period. Nonprofit charitable organizations classified as a 501(c) (3) or a public school district, private/public elementary and secondary schools are eligible for this grant. **Applications are due February 1, 2021.** To learn more about the grant and to apply, click [here](#).

For an archive of our previously listed Funding Opportunities, [click here](#).

Call for Phenomenal Staff and OST Programming!

To celebrate afterschool and extended learning providers, and to shine a light on the integral role that program staff plays in restoring Illinois, ACT Now will continue to showcase staff members and programs on our social media platforms and in our weekly newsletter. We will also share your stories and experiences with legislators and state agencies to advocate on your behalf!

Please email Emma Spencer (ACT Now - Youth Development Associate) at Spencere@actnowillinois.org. Please attach a photo, the name of the staff member or name of the afterschool program, and a caption for how this individual or program is working to support young people in the community.

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Call for Resources

Do you have valuable resources, stories, or best practices to share with the afterschool field? Please click [here](#) to share your resources with ACT Now and we will

disseminate them (via our newsletter and website) to other providers across the state! If you have any questions, please contact Emma Spencer (ACT Now - Youth Development Associate) at Spencere@actnowillinois.org.

NOTE: We are now sorting our trainings and resources by the Core Areas in the Illinois Statewide Afterschool Quality Standards to promote better understanding and implementation of the Standards. Dark blue headings denote a Core Area. To learn more about the Quality Standards, click [here](#).

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